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New Strategies for New Times

Looking back, it's easy to remember times when businesses or professions did only one thing. Appliance stores sold only appliances, and shipping companies got your package from point A to point B. Today you are able to buy your TV, washing machine, cell phone, and video games all at the same store. You can ship a package, make copies, and buy a greeting card at one location. Times have changed, and it has become increasingly difficult to wear only one hat and survive slow times or create opportunities for growth.

The buzz words in corporate offices across America have become diversification, relationships, and networking. However, those who do not proceed intelligently and intuitively will find limited success. The key is to diversify your services to relate to your client's needs while creating relationships with businesses and individuals who share your core values. Accomplish this, and you can promote a full service marketing strategy. This does not mean you must have all the answers, just that you are able to identify the issues and determine the appropriate consultant. For example, in today's marketplace, clients expect that when they are buying a home and issues need to be addressed, their real estate agent is going to be able to make an educated recommendation to negotiate the cost of repairs or have a reliable contractor at the ready who can give an opinion. The ability to provide client representation at all levels determines your value.

First, stay diverse in your own office. As an owner, remember the saying: there is no "I" in team. Acquire a wide range of skills and welcome the opinion and input

continued on page 54



Jim Nadeau (r) and surveyor Mark Carpenter discuss the layout of project at a local high school.



Jim and Mark checking the status of GPS receivers.



Jim discussing plans with a client.

Nadeau, continued from page 56
of all. Release control to your capable, competent, and willing staff. Most are actually more capable at many levels than the owner of the company, and it would be extremely wasteful not to utilize their knowledge due to ownership insecurities, ego, or fear. You will discover that the synergy is incredible, and it sets a tone of professionalism which will maximize the benefits of a strong team. Remember, building relationships is the core of all business models, and this means inside as well as outside of the office.

Of equal or greater importance, your company needs to be adding tools to its toolbox. When I became a licensed professional land surveyor twenty years ago, boundary and topographic surveys, and subdivisions were the core services for many surveyors. Over the years, I have acquired Certified Floodplain Manager and Certified Utility Locator designations, as well as an associate broker's license and have become a Realtor. This allowed our scope of professional services to become more diversified. A vital physical addition to our toolbox is our Topcon GPS equipment. It has allowed us to execute larger jobs and provide consultant services to our competitors. Tools that enhance efficiency, productivity, and scope of services advance business models greatly.

Diversification, relationships, and networking also mean building a solid network of consultants who have the same core values as your firm. Doing

so creates an indirect extension of your services. Attorneys, title companies, title insurance companies, architects, engineers, landscape architects, soil-scientists, carpenters, builders, and wetland delineators are a just a few of the occupations with whom land surveyors should form solid relationships. Beyond the benefit of meeting client expectations, having a broader working knowledge of related industries allows you to create ideas and expand your business plan. The comfort of being able to call an engineer for structural or drainage concerns, or an architect for design concerns has immeasurable benefits.

Furthermore, recognize your value as a consultant, and do not underestimate the value of your knowledge pertaining to land issues. As land surveyors, the web of interconnected services we offer clients is equally effective to other professions related to our industry. For example, for a Realtor representing a buyer, we can evaluate land issues, flood zone issues or insurance, subdivisions, land divisions, utilities, zoning compliance, etc. These often overlooked items are large issues found outside of the physical home which often have a large value associated with them. Countless times through my career as a professional land surveyor, I have realized that early assistance by a land surveyor in a project resolves many issues and creates many options. This provides greater client representation. A client many years ago said, "You're the last one I called on this project." My friend and former business partner responded, "I should have been the first."

Find success in client relationships as well as in gross revenue by communicating all of your services as a total package, but note division within contractual agreements. In a series of articles, I will break down the professional relationship of the land surveyor to specific industries: lenders, municipalities, architects, engineers, Realtors, and insurance agents. We will discuss the nature of their business and where our information is critical to the execution of their services. Where are the networking opportunities? And is it time for your business to become a resource



Viewing the paper Flood Insurance Rate Maps.

for town council meetings, continuing education courses, and local media? When we work together, we truly advocate for the client, and this results in a high level of client satisfaction in a reputation-based industry.

Client trust built on competent representation should always be the main objective of any professional consultant. A diverse skill set creates a calming effect which will build client trust very quickly and you will become a trusted professional in the industry and with your client. Provide information that can be used in the moment and relied upon at a later date. In the future, if the information the client has is no longer reliable due to changing circumstances the professionals they chose still should be. Regardless of your professional relationship—consultant, employee, client or customer—regard everyone as people desiring to be treated well, honestly, ethically, and with kindness. Not a daunting task if it all lies within your core values. Taking care of people is a business plan that will allow you to grow in sales and reputation. Your marketing strategy should begin here. *AS*



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